

Just You Wait and See

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Summary: World War II AU; a glorified headcanon mutated into an approximation of a narrative. Merida travels to the English countryside to work on a farm while the men are off at war. A broken tractor calls for a good mechanic, and she finds one at the airfield nearby.

Just You Wait and See

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** The named characters herein are property of Cressida Cowell, DreamWorks, and Disney Pixar. Not me. As per usual, the title is cribbed from a song; in this case it's famous WWII anthem "(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover."

This got entirely out of hand. I only meant to jot down some rough ideas about a World War II AU, but then it became this thing that's more or less an actual oneshot. I also did less than two minutes of research, so while I feel fairly confident in my representation of the facts, I may have made some mistakes.

I should probably note somewhere that I'm not saying Hiccup and Gobber are English. During the war there were several Allied bases in the UK, so apparently I'm saying that Berk was on the side of the Allies.

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><p>When war breaks out, Merida is more than keen to get involved somehow. Fergus' injury means the army won't accept him, though he's more than willing to fight, so he and Elinor open the castle to evacuee children. There are limited options for young ladies, though; the thought of sneaking off to try to join the army disguised as a man crosses Merida's mind, but she's afraid her hips would give her away, and she can't bring herself to chop off all of her hair. She first joins a nursing program and suffers through a week of training, struggling against the constant itchiness of her uniform and the desire to slap her simpering coworkers, and at the end of the week is

more than a little relieved when the matron gently but firmly tells her that she's not best suited to this kind of work, and her energy would be more useful elsewhere. The mere thought of working in a factory, all a-clatter with machinery and stinking of chemicals and things unnatural, makes her restless and irritable, so when her mum tells her that young women are needed for agricultural labor in England Merida decides that that's where she can be most helpful to the war effort. It's her first time leaving Scotland and there are not a few tears all around when she gets on the bus, though at the same time she's almost embarrassed at her own excitement about the opportunity. She sternly reminds herself that the war was not put on for her benefit, but she can't help breaking into a grin as she stares out the window, on her way to a new adventure.<p>

There are three other land girls at the farm to which she's assigned, and they're all watched over by the farmer, blinded in one eye in the previous war, and his wife and their young grandson. Merida isn't fond of the early hours, but she's grateful to be able to work outdoors, using her muscles in the fresh air. (She adores being able to wear trousers. Her mum will have to fight to get her out of them once the war's done.) After a difficult beginning she even manages to get along well with most of the other girls. They're all English, each of them with a different accent, and they tease each other for their dialects and teach each other slang words. When they talk about the places where they're from, the cinemas and restaurants and dance halls and theatres they frequented before the war and the men who accompanied them, Merida feels young and naïve, and begins to long for home; but then one of them asks about Scotland, saying she's always wanted to visit, and Merida tells them all about DunBroch and promises that after the war they'll all be welcome there, even if they are English. They also tell her about the airfield nearby and how sometimes they get to make deliveries there and see the airmen, so handsome and dashing, looking like regular film stars. The other girls sigh and giggle as they talk about the pilots' mustaches and sunglasses and uniforms, and Merida wonders what all the fuss is about. Who cares what the men look like? They get to \_fly\_.

Her dispassion about RAF personnel means that when Hoppy, the tractor, breaks down beyond their collective ability to repair it, Merida is the one sent to the airfield to beg a mechanic to come help. She's happy to go, whistling as the lorry bounces down the road; at the gate she leans one elbow out the window to ask directions and rewards the guard's response with a bright smile. She wanders into a hangar and stares in awe at the planes, so much bigger up close than they appear high overhead. That's where a man with a long, blond, surely not regulation mustache and a pronounced limp finds her. Upon hearing her request he grunts and then bellows into the depths of the hangar, from whence appears a younger man. He's in coveralls and his eyes are keen and curious; the other girls will be disappointed, she thinks, because he's no suave leading-man type. "If you take Hiccup, we won't miss him," the older man says, and the younger rolls his eyes and fetches a bulky toolbox. The ride back to the farm is silent, with Merida stealing glances at the man and worrying that she and Hoppy have been saddled with a subpar mechanic. As he works she hovers anxiously, hoping to be proven wrong, until he finally enlists her help, getting her to hand him tools. When he stops to pull down the top of the coveralls, knotting the arms around his waist, she remembers the manners her mum taught her and suggests a break, offering tea and biscuits; he accepts gratefully, though he's happy with water rather than tea, a smirk pulling at his

lips.

If he were more to the other girls' taste she wouldn't be able to talk to him. Since he's not she lets him rest for a moment before bombarding him with questions about the planes. He answers enthusiastically at first, then seems to remember that he shouldn't give away too much information; still, his enthusiasm makes it hard for him to rein himself in. She watches him rhapsodise about flying, describing it with his whole body, his expression alight. Before she can think it through, she asks, "If you can fly, why're you just a mechanic?"

"\_Just\_ a mechanic? I'll have you know I'm a fantastic one." He pauses, then knocks a fist into his left shin. There's an almost hollow sound, with a hint of a rattle, and he explains that he \_can\_ still fly, the leg doesn't keep him from doing anything he did before, but the RAF is a little strict about their pilots being in tip-top shape. "I'm ready, though," he says, "in case they ever loosen up," and gives her a lop-sided grin. They both know that the war will have to be going very badly for Britain before either of them is allowed to fight, and so she hopes that they never get the chance. Instead she tells him that after the war no one will be able to stop him from flying. She remembers the expression on his face, grateful and hopeful and unexpectedly determined, for a long time after that.

Somehow their paths begin to cross. She finagles her way into making deliveries near the airfield and then breezes confidently through the gates, ending up at his hangar for a chat; he rides his motorbike out to the farm on his day off to check on Hoppy. The girls take more notice of him than she'd expected, and she finds herself feeling possessiveâ€"he's \_her\_ friendâ€"though he doesn't seem interested in their flirting. He tells them all about a dance nearby that a lot of the airmen will be going to, though when he says, "So I'll see you there?" it's just to her and she nods, unable to answer otherwise. The evening of the dance she curses a blue streak about her hair until the others take pity on her and arrange it for her, brushing it and pulling it back to fall down her back. After her practical work outfits, the dress feels too tight, but they tell her she looks beautiful, and she has plenty of willing dance partners. She doesn't see him, though, not until she slips outside for a respite from the warm, smoky room. He's leaning against the motorbike and staring into the sky.

"I was afraid you'd decided not to come."

He laughs low. "I almost didn't. You've had plenty of dance partners, though."

"All but the one I wanted to dance with." She pulls him to the door, and he only resists when she's about to cross the threshold. Instead he catches her back and takes her hand, puts his other on her waist. The music is just loud enough to hear, and they dance quietly, away from the crowd. She's glad no one can see the scarlet in her cheeks when he murmurs that she looks amazing. Just as she's about to go up on her toes to kiss him the door opens and her name rings out, reminding her that they have a curfew and need to get back. The interruption startles her into a too-hasty step back, and only his hand still around hers keeps her from tumbling to the ground. Her confidence has fled so she squeezes his hand tightly before she

flees. In the lorry on the way back to the farm she puts off their questions by asking the other girls about who they danced with, and manages to laugh in the right places as they tease each other, even though her heart is thumping insistently in her chest.

Too many days pass without seeing or hearing from him. There are no excuses for visiting the airfield during the day, certainly no good reason to waste the petrol. The moment she has free time she borrows a bicycle and pedals like mad for the airfield, hoping to catch him, the need to see him growing more and more difficult to ignore or control. She arrives panting at the hangar only to find he's not there; he's gone on an errand to Birmingham, the man with the blond mustache says, and she doesn't bother to hide her disappointment. Gobber gives her tea and tells her stories while she rests, and by the time she leaves she's laughing, Gobber having promised to tell the lad she'd come to see him. Her lightheartedness lasts all the way back to the farm and into the evening, when the news comes on the wireless that Birmingham has been bombed again, and her blood goes cold.

There's nothing she can do but wait and keep working. She remembers what she told herself on the bus from Scotland: the war was not being put on for her benefit. It has never felt so real before, or so painful, and she tries to bottle her impatience and fear and carry on with her chores. The girls start to exchange worried glances around her, and the farmer's wife even offers her a precious bit of chocolate, and Merida feels like she's going to explode. The other girls decide to give her an afternoon off and banish her from the farm; she rides the bicycle in the direction opposite the airfield and stops when she reaches a small grove of trees. She climbs to the top of the tallest one and sits staring into the distance, daydreaming about jumping and being able to sprout wings before she hit the ground. There is dirt under her fingernails and wind in her hair. One day she will fly.

The next night one of the girls shakes her awake while another stands by with a second-best dress and the third with a brush. They dress her, shushing her questions, then lead her downstairs and all but shove her out the door, closing it so quickly it hits her behind. She turns, rubbing her arse and ready to shout at them, but a movement out of the corner of her eye catches her attention. "Hi," Hiccup says, and she's sure it's quiet but it sounds deafening in her ears. It feels like she's in a dream as she moves toward him; when he's within reach she pulls back and hits him as hard as she can in the arm and then immediately wrapping her arms around him, holding him close. He's real, solid and breathing and alive. With her cheek against his chest she closes her eyes, and when his arms wrap around her she sighs.

They sit in the barn and he tells her that they'd been out of the city by the time the bombing began. They'd gone back to see if they could be of any help, he says, and his voice falters, and his hand trembles faintly when she takes it in hers, squeezing to let him know that he needn't say anything more if he didn't want to. After a moment she tells him how she'd gone to see him but had had to spend time with Gobber instead, and now she wants to hear about his troll-hunting expeditions. His groan is belied by the small smile on his face, the way he relaxes a bit more, and she falls asleep to the sound of his voice and his fingers winding through her hair.

Routine wakes her more than anything else. She yawns, jaw cracking, before she opens her eyes; he's still there, and she can't help smiling. In the dim light she studies his face, now curious about the scar on his chin, now captivated by the freckles across his face, now, as he blinks, charmingly puzzled, and then registers her presence, conscious of the depth of her affection for him. "I'm sorry," he says, voice sleep-rough.

"About what?"

"Damaging your reputation." Though nothing happened between them she still blushes a little at the idea, ducking her head; but she can't keep her eyes from him. Despite being just as innocent as she he does indeed look contrite, biting his lower lip. She raises her hand to his face, traces his scar, the firm line of his jaw, gently pulls his lip free from between his teeth. Then she closes her eyes and leans forward.

Some things cannot wait, not when bombs fall and airplanes crash.

The kiss is like waking up all over again, just as languorous and sweet as before. His hand cups her cheek as if it was made to fit there; his lips are unhurried on hers. She wouldn't mind her early mornings so much if they were all so easy and so deliciously pleasant (even if her current posture did mean she'd be picking straw from her hair for the rest of the day), and at the idea she smiles into the kiss and threads her fingers through his hair.

When at last they part she says, "You haven't damaged anything that can't be fixed. And even if you had," she continues over his weak protests, "I happen to know a fantastic mechanic." He grins and sunlight sparkles through her. There are no promises they can make that the war cannot break, but they have this morning, and hope.

End  
file.